

Medical Exemptions

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why does my child have to have certain shots to attend school?

Answer: School shots or vaccinations are one of the best ways parents can protect their children from 16 serious diseases. Schools are filled with many children that share confined spaces. These diseases are easily spread in the school setting. When children get their shots, they protect themselves and others who are not able to get their shots due to a medical condition.

2. Are the shots optional or required?

Answer: Shots are required for PreK, Kindergarten, 7th and 12th grade in WV. Any student who is attending school in WV for the first time is required to meet certain immunization requirements. Information on what shots are required for school is available at the child's school or health department and on the Division of Immunization Services website at www.immunization.wv.gov.

3. What if my child is not medically able to receive the shots needed for school?

Answer: Your child can obtain a medical exemption from the specific vaccination(s) as warranted by the medical condition. This means the child would only be required to complete the shots their medical condition allows.

4. What is the process for requesting a medical exemption for my child?

Answer: The child's primary care physician makes a written request for a medical exemption to the Local Health Officer at the health department in the county where the child is enrolling into school. The request should specifically state the medical condition that may make vaccination inappropriate. The Local Health Officer will make the final decision whether to grant a valid medical exemption based on information in the latest Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) publication.

5. What happens if my child is given a medical exemption?

Answer: The child may attend school without getting the shot(s) for which the student received the exemption. It is possible that a child may have to receive some of the required shots.

6. What if my request for a medical exemption is denied by the Local Health Officer at the health department?

Answer: The child will have to receive the required shots to attend school. Parents or legal guardians have the right to appeal the decision of the Local Health Officer to the Bureau for Public Health. Please see how to proceed on page two.

7. What do I have to do to request an appeal of a medical exemption request denial?

Answer: The parent or legal guardian may submit a written request or may use the Request for Appeal form located online at www.immunization.wv.gov. Requests are submitted to the Bureau for Public Health's Commissioner's Office at 350 Capitol Street Suite 702, Charleston, WV 25301. A request for an appeal may also be submitted by fax to (304) 558-1035 or by e-mail to VaccineExemption@WV.GOV. The parent or legal guardian will also need to request that their treating physician send all medical records relevant to the medical condition that is the basis of the appeal to the Bureau for Public Health. After all information has been received by the Bureau for Public Health, the review process begins.

8. Is there a cost to file an appeal with the Bureau for Public Health?

Answer: No, the Bureau for Public Health does not charge any fee as part of the appeal.

9. How long does it take to find out the results of that appeal?

Answer: After the written request and all of the necessary medical information has been received by the Bureau for Public Health, the parent will be notified. A decision on the request is made as soon as possible. The decision will be communicated in writing to the parent or legal guardian, the child's requesting physician and the Local Health Officer. If all the medical records and any additional information requested by the Bureau for Public Health is not received, the appeal cannot be processed. Receipt of complete medical records allows consideration of the request and possible consultation with the treating physician, with the Bureau's subject matter experts and with national experts.

10. What is a provisional enrollment for school entry immunization requirements?

Answer: **A student who does not have all of the shots required for school entry may receive a provisional enrollment if they have had at least one dose of each of the required vaccines.** This provisional enrollment period (of up to 8 months) allows the student time to properly space and complete the missing vaccinations. The duration of the provisional enrollment period is based on the time medically necessary for the student to complete all the vaccines required to attend school, based on the standard catch-up schedule.

11. Who rules on the Request for a Medical Exemption if the child's Primary Care Physician or treating physician is the Local Health Officer in the county where the child goes to school?

Answer: The Local Health Officer shall recuse him or herself and refer the request to another Local Health Officer colleague in West Virginia.